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IN even a cursory examination of those books of the Old Testament, which contain in one form or another what may be called the Mosaic system, one realizes that everywhere the religious element is the most common. A closer examination, if it includes at the same time a comparison of the Mosaic system with other ancient systems, will bring to light still stronger evidence of this characteristic. But in what now does this religious element consist? We may answer in general: (1) in the supreme place assigned to sacrifice. No one will deny this who recalls the various kinds of sacrifice, the care with which each kind is separated from every other, the remarkable detail given for each ceremonial act, the symbolical significance which attaches itself to every feature of the ceremony. Or (2) in the prominence given the order of the priesthood, as seen in the selection of a particular tribe and a particular family from that tribe; as seen in the ritual, in accordance with which the priests were set apart for their sacred work; in the rules which regulated the contact of their life with that of others. Or, (3) in the elaborate system of days and seasons for festivals and worship; a system which provided for every seventh day, every seventh year, and every fiftieth year; which included the festivals of Spring, Summer and

Autumn ; which brought even the ordinary acts of life into connection, direct or indirect, with the God who was worshiped. Is it possible to deny the prominence of the religious element in this great system ?

THERE is also noticeable what may be called the civil element. The term is not a very definite one, but under it may be included the judicial and constitutional factors. Provision is certainly made for administering justice, and history shows that justice was administered. Moses himself soon learned that he could not attend to all the cases of dispute which arose among the people, and so very early in his administration it was found advisable to organize a judicial system. This was not elaborate, but without question it answered the purpose it was intended to subserve. That the system as a whole was exceedingly flexible appears from the fact that although it was organized under a dictatorship, the system, with all its departments, was able to adjust itself to the period of the judges, in which every man did that which was right in his own eyes ; to the period of the united kingdom under Saul, David and Solomon ; to the period of the divided kingdom, and to the period of the hierarchy. The Mosaic system does not represent a particular form of government as superior to every other form. It nowhere teaches that a republic, or a monarchy, or a hierarchy is the divinely authorized form of government. The principles of liberty and equality are found embedded in the system, but there seems to be no distinct purpose to teach these principles. Whatever the form of the government, Jehovah is the ruler. Men, by whatever name they may be called, are for the time being his representatives. It is God who sets up the king and who, for disobedience, deposes him. It is Jehovah of Hosts who leads the armies of Israel. There is without question a civil element in this system, but it is equally sure that there is no civil purpose ; no purpose, as it has been said, to present through Israel to the world a typical form of government which shall be understood by Israel and by the world to be a divine form. All rulers, it is true, receive their power from God. But this is just the point ; God will act through

any form of government ; through any duly authorized head, be he judge or prophet or king or priest. Again, we see that there is a civil element in the system, but no purpose to establish a civil system.

ONE cannot fail to note also an important sociological element in the Mosaic system. This appears for example in the ordinances which are laid down respecting the position of woman ; ordinances which honor her, but which do not give her the place of honor she occupied among the Egyptians. Her rights in many particulars are secured by law, but in many other particulars are left without definite determination. Or, in the place assigned to the slave in the social system. Here again leniency is the characteristic feature. The system found slavery as well as polygamy. The time had not yet come for either of them to be prohibited. They are regulated, and while these regulations certainly ameliorated the position of both the woman and the slave as compared with the condition of both in neighboring nations, the regulations on these subjects interposed barriers, temporary at least, to the highest purpose. These regulations indicated that a higher step is being taken ; a step certainly as high as the people of those times could be persuaded to take, whether by human or divine influence. The system contains then a sociological element. It was not, however, intended to teach a sociological system, or even the principles of such a system. If such a system is intended, it is certainly not a final one, nor in any sense ideal.

ONE finds also much of the hygienic element in the Mosaic system. Does some one ask where? The answer is quickly found. In the rite of circumcision which is today recommended by many physicians as most healthful ; in the distinction, everywhere marked and emphasized, between the clean and unclean in food, a distinction based, in large measure at least, upon the question of what was wholesome or unwholesome for the people of a particular climate ; or in the exceeding care taken by all concerned in reference to that most terrible of all

diseases, leprosy; or in the extremely rigorous cleansing required in connection with all sexual issues; or in the care taken that no contamination should result from contact with the dead.

But let us ask ourselves: (1) Was the rite of circumcision borrowed by the Hebrews from other nations which had practiced it for many centuries and adopted in order to secure a more perfect condition of health? Or was it not rather a religious symbol representing that which was most holy, and thus in striking contrast with the pagan and licentious purpose which it had hitherto subserved? (2) If the distinction between clean and unclean animals was chiefly hygienic, how shall we explain the fact that animals eaten by other nations with impunity were regarded by Israel as unclean? And further, what may be said with reference to the fact that while in detail the Hebrew classification differed from that of other nations, in general it was the same? Or (3) why was it that leprosy was selected from all other diseases, although it was not contagious, and why is chapter after chapter given to the regulations concerning this disease without a single reference to the prevention or cure of other diseases. (4) Why, if the purpose is a hygienic one, are not other issues considered besides those which are connected directly or indirectly with the origin of life?

THERE is granted the existence of the civil, sociological and hygienic elements in the Mosaic system. The question is, are these elements in any case so prominent, are they so distinct as to warrant us in saying that there is likewise a civil, a sociological, and a hygienic purpose in the system? That is to say, was the system organized and given to mankind not only to teach religion, but also to teach government, the principles of social science and the care of health; in other words, not only to teach *religion* but also to teach *science*? There may be a scientific element; indeed it is impossible to exclude such an element, but this is something different from assuming a scientific purpose. The question is a far reaching one. Grant that such a purpose

does exist, and it will be necessary to accept the necessary consequences of such an assumption, and to acknowledge that it was a particular purpose of the system to teach polygamy and slavery; to teach the care of health in respect to leprosy and in contact with the dead. What is the other position? Briefly stated it is this: that the Mosaic system was given by God to man simply and solely to teach religious truth. This will explain what is universally conceded, the overwhelming amount of the religious element. The presence of the other elements is easily understood in accordance with this theory. That rite which has been the symbol of all that is low and degrading is transformed and now represents all that is high and spiritual in religion. The people of Jehovah, who is a holy God, must also be holy. They must do nothing that will defile them. To do that which is forbidden is sinful, for of all sins the greatest is disobedience. The great disease to which man is subject is this same sin, gradually gaining control, loathsome in the extreme and destined in time to bring utter ruin. What better representation of the disease of sin than leprosy? The two mysteries in comparison with which all else is plain are the beginning of life and the end of life,—birth and death. No explanation of either of these has ever been found. In “forelife” as in “afterlife,” God especially manifests himself. This is his particular province. Or perhaps it was thought that in birth and in death there was manifested the curse of God, pronounced in Eden. However we explain it in detail, it remains true that the purpose here as everywhere is a religious one.

It seems, therefore, that under the guidance of the spirit the framer of the Mosaic system had before his mind at all times a religious ideal. Nothing is introduced which does not point in this direction. Rites and ceremonies known to other nations are adopted by him to serve this purpose. The most common events of life are arranged in order to carry out this purpose. It is religion everywhere, science nowhere. He deals with that which is fundamental and everlasting, which had always been

true, and should always remain true ; while other elements which are always changing appear as incidental only. The policy of the author of the system was a religious policy. Is there here a practical lesson? If so, it is this: Keep religious truth to the forefront; make it prominent. That which is secular cannot be permanent. Why lay such stress upon it? The Mosaic system is a model for all systems.